

Students face 'unfair practices, systemic racism' at the U of O



photo by Ian Flett

Mireille Gervais is the coordinator of the Student Appeal Centre.

Report alleges injustice in university appeals process

by Len Smirnov
Fulcrum Contributor

"MISTREATMENT OF STUDENTS, Unfair Practices and Systemic Racism at the University of Ottawa" was the title of the Nov. 12 report released by the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa's (SFUO) Student Appeal Centre (SAC). The report is the latest development in the ongoing struggle between the student body and the U of O administration regarding academic appeals at the U of O, outlining numerous obstructions that students face and criticizing the administration's role in the appeals process.

According to the report, students encounter long delays in the resolution of their cases primarily due to a lack of deadlines for the U of O administration to respond to students' appeal requests. The Senate Appeals Committee, the highest level of appeal for individual cases, is also accused of not resolving the cases it receives in fewer than six months. In the meantime, students encounter little guidance as to where to direct their claims or seek professional support.

"Students are uninformed [about] where to address their appeals. They have little information and have to do the follow-ups themselves," said Mireille Gervais, SAC coordinator.

Unwritten rules create additional complications for students entering the appeals process, according to the SAC. Gervais estimated that approximately 80 per cent of her work is based on unwritten practices, where the administration may not strictly adhere to standard procedures. Students unfamiliar with these practices lack important knowledge on how to file their claims and conduct themselves during case hearings.

Many students testify that they were mistreated during their Senate Appeals Committee hearings. The SAC report claims that students are treated as guilty before they present their cases and that the students' intentions have little value in comparison to the professors' statements.

"I observe a lot of contempt for students," said Gervais. "I can tell in a minute or two of the hearing if the student will win or lose, by judging the [Senate] members' attitude toward the student."

The report indicated that many students lose determination to pursue their appeals due to the amount of problems that permeate the whole process. Some students abandon their appeals after being subjected to long delays or allegedly experiencing a condescending attitude from the administration. Sixty-two out of 388 students abandoned their appeals over the past academic year.

"Some students don't trust the system at all," said Gervais. "Students realize that there are no policies to protect their rights and are completely disillusioned with the system."

The SAC report also suggests that professors and the Senate Appeals Committee wilfully discriminate against visible minorities. Seventy-one per cent of academic fraud cases recorded between Nov. 1, 2007 and Oct. 31, 2008, involved students of visible minority status. The SAC alleges that these statistics are not coincidental but indicative of systemic racism within the university administration.

Director of the U of O's Office of Communications Andrée Dumulon questioned the accuracy of the report's statistics and the existence of problems within the appeals process.

"We have to evaluate the information that is in the report, but that takes time and at the moment it is premature to say anything," she said in response to the report's accusations.

The SAC pressured the university to make several changes to the appeals process in February 2008, including revoking Senate members' anonymity, adding an undergraduate seat to the Senate Appeals Committee, and forcing faculties to send in submissions concerning student appeals in no more than 21 business days. The new process has already experienced setbacks, however: average delays for Senate hearings increased to 82 days from 78 days, and the candidacy of recently de-registered sixth-year physics student Marc Kelly as the undergraduate student member on the Senate was rejected, namely due to the fact that Kelly is currently pursuing appeals of his own.

APPEALS continued on p. 8



FÉUO SFUO
Fédération étudiante
Student Federation

www.sfuoc.ca

Campus Report

OPEN CALL

AUDITIONS: NOV. 26
AGORA (UCU)
16 H - 19 H

INTERESTED? CONTACT
COMMUNITY@SFUO.CA
AND VP.SOCIAL@SFUO.CA



GOT THE RHYTHM? STEP TO THE BEAT

TALES OF THE WORLD
NOV. 22

Doors open at 7:00 P.M.
Alumni Auditorium

Tickets on sale at the
International House office
'10 Students and staff
'12 for all others.

www.ihouse.sfuoc.ca

The SFUO Campaigns Committee
is now open to EVERY student.

It will take place December 2, 2008.

Submit your proposal for
a SFUO campaign
by November 18, 2008 to:
vp.university@sfuo.ca

EVERY STUDENT has the RIGHT
to propose campaigns,
participate in the committee,
and VOTE on the direction
of the SFUO.



Do you want to
change something?

DEC. 6

END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

wrc@sfuo.ca



campaigns@sfuo.ca

DON'T FEED THE
STEREOTYPE

Nov. 24 - 28

MORE INFORMATION AT
WWW.IHOUSE.SFUO.CA

SIGN-UP NOW! WINTER GAMES



Jan. 26-30

WWW.WINTER.SFUO.CA

DEC. 10

DIVERSITY
DAY

Events:

- Juried art competition and exhibition (UCU Promenade)
- Teas around the World (UCU Agora)
- Film and video screenings (UCU Agora)

News in brief



photo by Braeden Urbanek (CUP)

York strike leaves students in the cold

TORONTO (CUP) – CLASSES AT YORK University were cancelled as the union representing faculty, teaching, and graduate assistants walked off the job on Nov. 6.

Graham Potts, negotiator for CUPE 3903—the union representing the part-time York staff—said they are willing to go back to the negotiating table, but only when the university comes back with a fair deal.

Potts indicated that it was not wages that were the biggest concern of the union, but rather protection against the cost of living. He detailed that staff want their wages linked to the consumer price index, so that if the index rises, workers “do not continue to fall behind”.

York Dean of Arts Robert Drummond indicated that the university will be willing to “make moves” once they can ensure the union is in favour of reaching a settlement.

The York Federation of Students (YFS) is backing CUPE 3903 and YFS executives were all seen picketing alongside union members.

Drummond indicated that the strike could last for several weeks.

—Scott McLean and David Ros,
The Excalibur

Canada's most vital graduates drawn to U.S.

EDMONTON (CUP) – A NEW STUDY shows that Canada is losing fewer graduates to the United States than anticipated, but it's the smarter students who are leaving.

A study by University of Guelph professor David Walters indicated that those who are leaving generally tend to be in the fields that are considered vital to the emerging knowledge-based economy.

Engineers, computer-science graduates, and especially those in help-related fields are at the top of the list. The amount of nurses heading south actually outnumbers the total doctors leaving the country.

Walters believes his study could aid the country's graduate retention by influencing the government into providing tax incentives for graduates, or making additional efforts to keep them in Canada. Businesses may also want to consider competitive wage rates to keep the more qualified graduates in the country.

—Kirsten Goruk,
Alberta and Northern Bureau Chief

APPEALS continued from p. 6

The SAC met with U of O President Allan Rock in September and sent an advance copy of their annual report for his review.

“We thanked the Student Appeal Centre for the advance copy and saw it as a sign of goodwill,” said Dumulon. “We want to work closely with the students. We are hopeful that we can come to some collaborative agreement.”

At the Nov. 17 Board of Governors meeting, Rock indicated that the university has taken the report quite seriously.

“I know enough about the work that's been done to date to tell you that we're going to disagree very strongly that there's any evidence to support the allegations that have been made,” he said.

“We've just about completed our analysis of the report ... and we're going to be tabling a response to the report in the coming days,” Rock added.

The SAC is less optimistic about swift resolutions to the issues raised in the report.

“The university holds 100 per cent of the power,” said Gervais. “Until we have a powerful student body, the problem will not be resolved.”

**Staff meetings.
We have them.
Thursdays at 4 p.m.
631 King Edward Ave.
The Fulcrum.**

Vote November 18, 19 & 20

The Canadian Federation of Students is a national student organization and the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario is a provincial student organization with a total membership of over 500,000 university and college students.

The Canadian Federation of Students was formed in 1981 to advocate for an affordable, high-quality system of post-secondary education and to provide services and provincial and national student representation for students.

For full-time students, the fee is \$3.90 per semester for the Canadian Federation of Students (\$1.95 for part-time students) and the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario fee is \$3.25 per semester (\$1.63 for part-time students).

Are you in favour of membership in the Canadian Federation of Students and the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario?

Polling Stations

UCU-Financial Aid: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

UCU-SFUO: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

UCU-Tim Hortons: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Desmarais: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Fauteaux: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Lamoureux: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Marion: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Montpetit: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Rez Complex: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

SITE: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Tabaret: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Roger Guindon: 8:00 A.M. to 8 P.M.

